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Restor

COUNTRY

SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI

13 FEBRUARY 1968

SUBJECT

VICE PRESIDENT KY'S INTENTION TO RECOMMEND TO PRESIDENT THIEU THAT TASK FORCE BE ABOLISHED

ACQ

SOURCE

VIETNAM, SAIGON (14 FEBRUARY 1968)

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

SUMMARY: VICE PRESIDENT KY HAS DECIDED TO RECOMMEND TO PRESIDENT THIEU NO LATER THAN 18 FEBRUARY THAT THE TASK FORCE BE ABOLISHED. KY WILL ARGUE THAT THE TASK FORCE HAS ACCOMPLISHED ITS OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING BASIC POLICES AND PROCEDURES FOR RELIEF AND THAT THE MINISTRIES SHOULD NOW BE ALLOWED TO TAKE OVER. HE IS ACTUALLY MOTIVATED BY FEAR OF ACCUSATIONS THAT HE IS USING THE TASK FORCE TO GRAB POWER. KY WILL TELL THIEU THAT IF THE TASK FORCE IS TO BE RETAINED, ITS NAME AND CHARTER SHOULD BE CHANGED. KY'S AIDES ARE DISTURBED BY KY'S DECISION, FEELING THAT WITHOUT KY'S HAND, RELIEF WORKS WILL FALTER. BEFORE KY TALKS WITH THIEU, HE WILL PROBABLY TRY TO INITIATE SOMETHING SPECTACULAR WITH REGARD TO ARMING THE PEOPLE. END SUMMARY.

1.

ON 13 FEBRUARY

VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION OF RECOMMENDING TO PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU NO LATER THAN 18 FEBRUARY THAT THE TASK FORCE BE DISSOLVED. KY'S RATIONALE, AS HE PLANS TO PRESENT IT TO THIEU, IS THE FOLLOWING:

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

A. SINCE THE TASK FORCE WAS DESIGNED FOR EMERGENCY RELIEF PURPOSES, IT SHOULD BE KEPT IN EXISTENCE ONLY UNTIL THE BASIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR RELIEF HAVE BEEN SETTLED. THIS HAS NOW BEEN ACCOMPLISHED.

B. THE GOVERNMENT HAS A DULY CONSTITUTED STRUCTURE OF MINISTRIES WITH ASSIGNED PROPER RESPONSIBILITIES. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOW BE PERMITTED TO RUN IN A MORE NORMAL FASHION.

2. ALTHOUGH KY SEEMS TO BELIEVE THE ABOVE RATIONALE TO SOME EXTENT, HE IS MOTIVATED MORE BY A FEAR OF BEING ACCUSED OF GRABBING POWER IN THIS CRISIS FOR REASONS OF PERSONAL AMBITION. CRITICISMS FROM HIS CRITICS IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT HAVE REACHED HIM TO THE EFFECT THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT HAS ESTABLISHED A SUPERMINISTRY AROUND HIS OWN PERSON AND IN THE FORM OF THE TASK FORCE. KY INSISTS THAT HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN ASSUMING POWER IN THIS INDIRECT WAY AND THAT, REALIZING THE NEED FOR HIS SERVICES IN THE EMERGENCY, HE WAS PLEASED TO HAVE OFFERED THEM AND NOW WISHES TO STEP DOWN.

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...HAS PLEASED TO HAVE OFFERED ...
TO STEP DOWN.

3. KY WILL PROBABLY ATTEMPT TO DISCUSS HIS TENURE WITH THE PRESIDENT PRIVATELY AND WILL MAKE CLEAR THAT HE WILL DEFER TO THE PRESIDENT'S WISHES. HE WILL REMIND THE PRESIDENT THAT WHILE HIS OWN IDEA OF THE TASK FORCE REVOLVED AROUND A CONCEPT OF "NATIONAL RECOVERY," THE PRESIDENT'S STAFF HAD ALTERED BOTH THE CONCEPT AND THE TITLE OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO "EMERGENCY RELIEF." IF THIS IS, IN FACT, THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S FUNCTION, THEN ITS MISSION HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. IF THIEU WISHES KY TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND ENERGY TO THE COMMITTEE, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO CHANGE ITS FRAME OF REFERENCE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE ON-GOING AND LENGTHIER PROCESS OF RECOVERY IN THE LARGER SENSE OF THE WORD. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] KY SEEMS TO BE ATTRACTED TO THE IDEA OF CONTINUING IN A POWERFUL EXECUTIVE ROLE BUT IS HOLDING HIMSELF VERY MUCH IN CHECK AGAINST ANY TEMPTATION TO "GRAB" THAT ROLE. HE FEELS STRONGLY THAT IT MUST BE GIVEN HIM BY THE PRESIDENT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CONSTITUTION.)

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

4. SOME OF KY'S AIDES HAVE EXPRESSED SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING WITH KY'S REASONING AND, THEREFORE, HIS INTENTION. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY PREDICT THAT THE EMERGENCY RELIEF WORK, HARDLY COMPLETED, WILL SUFFER IF KY WITHDRAWS AND THE COMMITTEE IS DISSOLVED. SUCH A DISSOLUTION WOULD, OF COURSE, ALSO REMOVE THANG FROM DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE RELIEF ACTIVITIES, UNLESS HE WERE ASSIGNED SOME NEW ROLE BY CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN. THE BUSINESS OF RELIEF WOULD BE UNDOUBTEDLY DISCUSSED IN A DAILY MEETING OF THE CABINET UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF PRIME MINISTER LOC. THESE MEETINGS WOULD, LIKE MOST CABINET MEETINGS, INDULGE IN ENDLESS TALK AND FEW DECISIONS WITHOUT THE FIRM HANDS OF KY AND THANG BEING APPLIED. THUS, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SOON BE FLOODED WITH UNSOLVED PROBLEMS AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND COULD PROBABLY TAKE TWO WEEK'S TIME. THE EARLY RUMBLINGS IN THE ASSEMBLY AGAINST PRIME MINISTER LOC'S APPARENT HELPLESSNESS IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE VIET CONG ATTACK WOULD RESUME AND BECOME AGGRAVATED.

5. ONE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCE OF KY'S INTENTION TO WITHDRAW FROM THE TASK FORCE ON 18 FEBRUARY IS AN APPARENT FEELING OF URGENCY ON HIS PART TO INITIATE SOMETHING SPECTACULAR AND CONCRETE WITH REGARDS TO "ARMING THE PEOPLE." PARTLY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF GENERAL THANG, KY MAY BE MOVED TO BESTOW ARMS ON THE ALREADY WELL-ORGANIZED CATHOLIC PARISHES IN SOME OF THE MORE DIFFICULT AREAS OF SAIGON AND ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE CITY. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE RECEIVED 14 PRIESTS ON 13 FEBRUARY. [REDACTED] IT IS NOT KNOWN JUST WHAT SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS, IF ANY, WERE MADE TO THE CATHOLIC REPRESENTATIVES.) WHILE KY HAS INDICATED HIS APPRECIATION OF SOME OF THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN HASTY ACTION IN THIS FIELD, HE NEVERTHELESS IS INTENT ON EXPLOITING THE UPSURGE OF ANTI-VIET CONG FEELING AND BELIEVES THE CATHOLICS TO BE MOST READILY ABLE TO ACQUIRE AND USE ARMS AGAINST THE VC. [REDACTED] KY'S DESIRE TO BE PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN INITIATING SUCH A PROGRAM AMONG THE CATHOLICS DOES HAVE POLITICAL OVERTONES.)

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

6. (FIELD COMMENT: ANOTHER VERSION OF THE 13 FEBRUARY MEETING AND ANALYSIS OF KY'S PLANS WAS PUBLISHED AS [REDACTED])

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

7. FIELD DISSEM: STATE (AMBASSADOR BUNKER, POLITICAL COUNSELOR) USMACV (GENERAL WESTMORELAND, GENERAL ABRAMS. AMBASSADOR KOTER, CHIEF OF STAFF, J-2) 7TH AIR FORCE (GENERAL MONYER ONLY) DIS/JUSPAO (MR. ZORTHIAN ONLY) CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF